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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 28 July 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Parliament of Georgia has adopted the country's new Criminal Code at the first reading.

In accordance with that document, the articles that had previously provided for the imposition of capital punishment have been amended to impose a sentence of life imprisonment.

The abolition of capital punishment in Georgia has raised the question of the fate of the 54 prisoners who had already been sentenced to death for various heinous felonies. Since the newly adopted law has no retroactive power, the death sentence imposed on those prisoners could not be commuted to life imprisonment.

Under the circumstances and for humanitarian reasons, on 25 July 1997, the President of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, issued Decree No. 387, whereby he granted clemency to all 54 prisoners and, in accordance with article 73 of the Constitution of Georgia, commuted their sentence to 20 years' imprisonment.

The abolition of capital punishment is undoubtedly a major step forward in Georgia's progress towards democracy and lives up to the highest international standards of conduct and humanitarian principles.

May I ask for your kind assistance in having the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 114 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

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